

13. (twice amended) A method of document retrieval in a network environment having web sites where documents are stored and query servers where document searches are launched comprising,

34 providing a plurality of document servers in the web sites, each having an association with a plurality of documents, each document identified with a unique URL, each document server having an access control list defining user identification and for each user identification listing URLs for which access is permitted or denied,

determining by one of the document servers whether each URL is compatible with the access level of the identification code of the person; and

producing only those documents whose URL is compatible with the access level of the identification code of the person, wherein each non-compatible URL is withheld.

Remarks

In the above referenced Office action, claims 1-8 and 11-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schloss (U.S. Patent No. 5,706,507). Applicant has amended claims 1, 2, 4 and 13 to present the rejected claims in better form for consideration. Such amendments are permitted upon, "a showing of good and sufficient reasons why they are necessary and were not earlier presented." 37 CFR § 1.116(b). Applicant contends that the application, as amended, is in condition for allowance and hereby submits the following remarks to comply with 37 CFR § 1.116.

A. The Amendments Are Necessary to Clarify The Invention

The Applicant disagrees with the Examiner's statement in Paragraph 34 of the above-referenced Office action that prohibiting the display of URLs has not been claimed. For example, claim 4 (amended) claims, "delivering only those documents whose URL is compatible with the access level of the person." Implicit in that claim is the fact that

URLs that are not compatible with the access level of the person are not delivered. Nevertheless, the Applicant has amended claims 2, 4 and 13 so that this feature of the invention is perfectly clear.

The Applicant has also amended claim 1. This amendment further emphasizes the fact that the invention screens documents at the servers. This feature prevents any client manipulation of the search process. The search engine only produces those documents for which a client has access.

B. The Amendments Were Not Presented Earlier Because The Applicant Believed The Claims to Be in Condition For Allowance

The Applicant's amendments contained herein were not presented earlier because the Applicant believed that the claims fully described the invention. Moreover, the Applicant maintains that the Examiner's remarks in the Office actions do not adequately address the substantial differences between clients and servers in computer architecture. Furthermore, the Applicant maintains that the Examiner is granting a broader interpretation to Schloss than is supported by the patent.

The Applicant disputes the Examiner's contention in Paragraph 28 of the above-referenced Office action that a gateway is similar to the proposed invention. A gateway controls physical access to a server, and not to particular documents contained on that server. A gateway's only function is to determine whether the IP address of the client can access a server, or not. To put it simply, a gateway is a gate that is either open or closed. Once access is granted, other systems must monitor the access to resources behind the gate. Therefore, the gateway disclosed in Schloss does not make the present invention obvious as each has clearly distinct functions. See Schloss 4:7-19.

The Applicant strongly disagrees with the Examiner's contention in Paragraph 30 of the above-referenced Office action that, "in a client/server environment, servers and clients can be interchanged." While it is true that a

computer can, in some instances, act as both a client and a server, the functions of each are vastly different. A client is defined as a requester of services and a server is defined as a provider of services. Servers generally contain databases of information that can be accessed by a plurality of clients.

There are three main client/server aspects to Schloss described in claim 1, wherein each aspect has distinct responsibilities. First, there is a content server that provides content by URL. Second, there is an advisory server that rates the content by URL. Third, there is a client that can filter content based upon ratings provided by the advisory server. In Schloss, the client specifically requests content from the content servers by an explicit URL. For instance, a client would either enter a specific URL in a browser window or click on a HTML tagged link leading to a specific URL. In both instances the client has a particular destination or URL in mind. Then, the client can selectively "inhibit loading" of the URL if the advisory server, in conjunction with advisory settings at the client, deems the URL unsuitable. Schloss only claims using the characterization data provided by the advisory server at the client. Otherwise, the advisory server would have to be able to intercept transmissions from the content server to the content requester in order to inhibit loading. Such features are simply not claimed and are not obvious.

The present invention differs greatly from Schloss. First, the present application claims a search engine or query server as a part of the method. See claims 1, 4, 13. The method of document retrieval described requires a client to first perform a search for documents on a document server. For instance, a client in marketing could be searching on the accounting server for financial data to be included in a press release. Such a search could reveal information suitable for public release as well as confidential financial forecasts. The search engine would return all of the relevant results. The results, however, would be reviewed by the document server to check whether each individual document (URL) would be

suitable for the client requesting the documents. In the example, the marketing client might not have an access level compatible with confidential financial forecasts, so only the public financials would be returned by the search engine. The client would have no idea that the confidential information was blocked, which would increase security by discouraging the client from seeking a work-around if they were blatantly denied a document. Such a method of document retrieval is only available under the method of the present application. Schloss does not contemplate doing the review at the server.

The Applicant further disagrees with the Examiner in Paragraph 36, wherein the, "Examiner maintains that checking the validity of URLs would restrict access where the URLs and other information were deemed invalid." True, the patent to Kirsch (U.S. Patent No. 5,751,956) would prohibit access to a URL if the URL was invalid. This is common sense. If the URL is invalid (i.e. does not exist, or has moved to another location) there is no way to simply access that URL. Kirsch '956 discloses a method for redirection of server external hyper-link references. This allows URL locations to be moved and have the old URL automatically refer the user to the new URL. The validation that is performed under Kirsch '956 relates to assessing the physical existence of the link (i.e. whether the address is still valid). The invention does not control access to a particular URL contained on the server. It only determines whether the link works or not. See Kirsch '956 Figs. 3 and 4, and 9:51 to 10:23.

Finally, the Applicant believed that the remarks submitted in response to the last Office Action sufficiently differentiated the disclosed invention from the prior art. The functions of clients and servers are not interchangeable, as each element has distinct responsibilities (i.e. either serving or requesting data). These differences, and others, were fully described in the prior remarks. Therefore, the Applicant hereby incorporates the remarks filed on November 15, 1999 in this response.

Conclusion

In view of the amendments and remarks made herein, Applicant requests consideration of the claims as amended. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

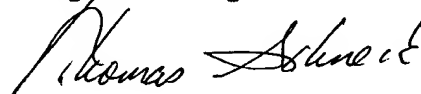
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